

on countries which did not want them, or to take any step which might compromise in other quarters the relations of those countries which only desire to maintain their own neutrality inviolate." He hoped and believed that Russia's legitimate interest in maintaining the independence of her neighbours could be adjusted to the desire of England and France for a united front against aggression.

This analysis of the situation proved too optimistic. Mr. Strang, a Foreign Office expert, was despatched to Moscow on June 12, but the negotiations continued to drag. Russia claimed to protect herself by guaranteeing the Baltic states, who feared Moscow far more than Berlin; and Poland, haunted by bitter memories, declared that she would never allow a Russian soldier to set foot on her soil. The unexplained dismissal on May 3 of Litvinoff, the champion of co-operation with the Western democracies and the League, was ominous. The despatch of British and French Military Missions to Moscow at the beginning of August was taken to mean that agreement was in sight; but while political and military discussions were in progress a Russo-German treaty of non-aggression, of which the secret had been well kept, was signed on August 23. Poland's doom was sealed, for with the removal of the nightmare of war on two fronts Hitler and his army chiefs were ready to strike. Since he was as firmly resolved to possess Danzig as were the Poles to keep it, our final efforts in Berlin to avert the fall of the avalanche were in vain.

The British Government was rightly determined that no such uncertainty concerning our action as prevailed in 1914 should occur. The clearest statement of our intentions was made by Lord Halifax at the annual Chatham House dinner on, June 29. We had assumed obligations and

were preparing
to assume more with full understanding of their
consequences.
" We know that if the security and
independence of other
countries are to disappear, our own security
and our, own
independence will be gravely threatened. We
know that,
if international law and order is to be preserved,
we must be
prepared to fight for its defence. In the past we
have always
stood out against the attempt by any single
Power to dominate
Europe at the expense of the liberties of other
nations, and
British policy is therefore only following the
inevitable line
of its own history if such an attempt were to be
made again.
... In the event of further aggression we are
resolved to use
at once the whole of our strength in fulfilment of
our pledges